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Congresswoman Matsui Kicks off the 2012 Levee Vegetation Research Symposium

Calls on Corps to Implement a Variance Policy that Addresses Regional Needs

□ **SACRAMENTO, CA** – Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-05) today gave the welcoming remarks at the first day of the 2012 Levee Vegetation Research Symposium.□ During her speech she discussed the consequences of the Army Corps of Engineers existing levee vegetation policy and the need for the Corps to implement a science-based variance policy that addresses regional needs and the realities on the ground.

“As we all know, the Corps’ policy would require a fundamental change to much of our levees.□ It could force thousands of trees to be pulled out and the levees to be rebuilt...But most importantly to me, in a time of shrinking federal, state and local budgets, it could lead us down a path that makes levee improvements too costly to implement,” said Congresswoman Matsui during her remarks.□ “I fundamentally believe we need to find the right balance between ensuring we have strong and safe levees, and prudent fiscal and environmental considerations.

Congresswoman Matsui has been a leader in Congress, advocating for the Corps to revise its vegetation on levees policy.□ She was the first Member to raise concerns about the Corps policy and has continued to voice concerns in meetings with Assistant Secretary of the Army Jo-Ellen Darcy, by spearheading two California Delegation letters to the Corps, and introducing bipartisan legislation, H.R. 5831, that currently has 30 cosponsors.□ This legislation, the Levee Vegetation Review Act, would require the Corps to thoroughly review and reconsider their current position on vegetation on levees.□ Instead of a one-size-fits-all national standard, the bill would require the Corps to move to regional variances with input from the state and local entities that are most familiar with the unique challenges facing each community.

“Ultimately, the Corps can follow the science on this or Congress can force them to. Moving forward, it is my sincere hope that the Corps works with all of us in a constructive manner,” added Congresswoman Matsui.

The 2012 Levee Vegetation Research Symposium is the second that has been held. The purpose of the symposium is to take stock of what has been learned over the past five years, since the first symposium in 2007. This year’s theme is “scientific progress informing a path forward.” The Symposium began today and runs through August 30th, with over 200 researchers and engineers from across the world in attendance.

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